

THE MAGAZINE FOR PRINCE FANS AND COLLECTORS

UPTOWN

SHUT UP!
ALREADY,
DAMN!

The Definitive Guide To All Prince's Interviews

#10

UPTOWN #10

1 July 1993.

UPTOWN is published quarterly.
In addition to these issues (1 January,
1 April, 1 July, 1 October),
a fifth (special) issue is published yearly.

Address:

UPTOWN
Box 87
S-590 62 LINGHEM
Sweden

This special issue is compiled by
the UPTOWN staff:

Magnus Nilsson, Sam Sandberg,
Catharina Gustafsson, S.H. Roque,
Lars O. Einarsson and Per Nilsen.

Intro by Magnus Nilsson, with parts of the
text based on *Everything you want to know
about... Prince* by Jim Feldman.

Subscription:

The annual subscription is for 5 issues
with the following subscription rates:
USA: \$40, Great Britain: £20, Germany:
DM 60, France: F200, Holland: f 70,
Belgium: Bfr 1300, Sweden: 200 kr,
Norway: 230 kr, Denmark: 230 kr, Finland:
170 mk, Spain: 4.000 pts, Italy: L. 50.000,
Switzerland: 60 Swiss francs,
Austria: 400 schilling, Japan: ¥ 5.000,
Australia: A\$50.

Note that countries other than the above
must pay in one of these currencies.

Send your payment by
International Money Order (Europe only!),
or cash (paper currency only, no coins!)
to the address above.

If possible, send money by registered mail
and/or return receipt.
No cheques!

Back issues:

If you are interested in back issues,
send an IRC to the address above
for more information.

UPTOWN #1 - #3 are sold out.

Any businesses in the US interested in
carrying UPTOWN,
please contact our US representative:
NJW Productions
PO Box 581233
Minneapolis, MN 55458-1233
phone (612) 536-1999

No portion of this magazine may be
reproduced without permission in writing
from UPTOWN.

Magazine design by Lars O. Einarsson.
Printed in Sweden.
© 1993 UPTOWN.

UPTOWN #11: 1 October 1993.

Cover photo and all other photos
by Warner Bros.

SHUT UP!

Artists often ask why people want to know more than is contained in their work. The answer is obvious: it is natural to want to understand how someone's ideas developed; upbringing and other influences help an interested follower interpret their work more fully.

Stage performances, films and records are not made to give accurate, truly revealing glimpses into the lives and personalities of artists, since they are carefully, painstakingly crafted to express what the artist wants the public to see or hear. Certainly, an artist's beliefs and attitudes are visible in his or her work. This is especially true in the case of Prince. His strong religious beliefs have a pervasive influence on nearly all his writing, and even though he has been criticized for the sexual contents of his work, Prince has always maintained that the emphasis on sex is an honest rather than a calculated reflection of his own creative instincts.

But ultimately, all we see is a public persona, not the private person behind the record or concert. So the only chance the public has to get some idea of what an artist is "really like" is through interviews with the press and other media. Sure, the artist can respond to questions seriously, facetiously, or deceptively, as Prince often did in the early interviews. But what is important to remember is that an interview is a rare situation in which the performer is not in control, and much can be learned from his or her manner and attitude towards the interview and the person conducting it.

"GUARDED, SHY AND A BIT CALCULATING"

Prince's unwillingness to talk to the press is frequently attributed to shyness, but other possibilities should be considered. In his book on Prince, Jon Bream wrote, "Associates say he felt misinterpreted and burned after some early interviews, so he invented stories..." In *Rolling Stone's* 1983 cover story on Prince, a former associate (who remained anonymous) suggested, "He's afraid he might say something wrong or say too much."

Another likely reason is that put forth by writer Debbie Miller, author of the *Rolling Stone* article, "He loves to surround himself with an air of mystery, to create false identities to tangle the clues that lead to him." Prince has often said "I'm not mysterious," but in the interviews he has given, he has frequently contradicted himself and been overtly evasive.

From the interviews he has granted and from the observations of those conducting them, a picture of Prince's character begins to come into focus. No question, shyness is a strong part of his makeup. In December 1980, he told Dennis Hunt of the *Los Angeles Times* that he prefers phone interviews and that he is "really shy" if he hasn't met someone before. He also said that he doesn't like interviews because "I have to do all the talking." Two months later, he said in an interview with Milt Petty of the *Los Angeles Daily News*, "I just don't like to talk so much. I'd rather learn. That's why I can speak more freely over the phone."

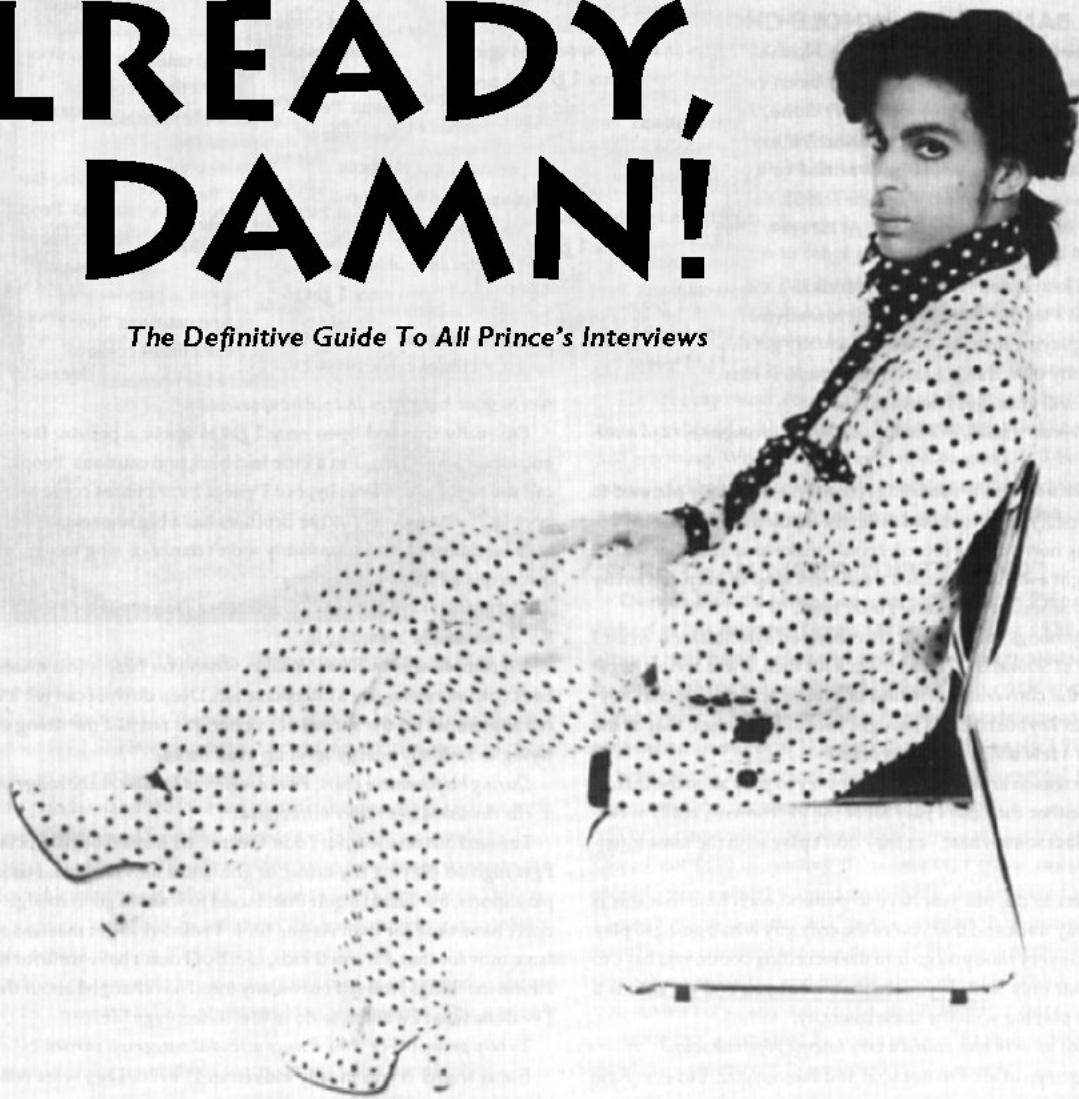
Most writers who have had the opportunity to talk with Prince have commented on his shyness and cautious reserve. Barbara Graustark, who did a lengthy interview for *Musician*, described him as having the "gravity of a crestfallen child." Minneapolis writer Martin Keller said that Prince was "guarded, shy, and a bit calculating." Jim Farber, who did a short piece on Prince for *Playboy*, says, "I didn't find him overly forthcoming. He didn't volunteer much information."

Cynthia Horner, who conducted some of the earliest interviews with Prince, wrote that Prince would ask her as many questions as she asked him and that he would tease her and play jokes on her. *Black Stars* writer Lisa Collins said that Prince would give very short answers and stay silent and that often he seemed "uninterested or rebellious." His answers to her questions were basically irrelevant. When she asked him about his priorities in life, he said, "To be fat."

By the time Prince gave a round of interviews to promote *Dirty Mind*,

ALREADY, DAMN!

The Definitive Guide To All Prince's Interviews



he seemed to have matured and to be willing to take the "Q&A" sessions more seriously. Some interviewers even commented that he was "pleasant" and "composed and polite."

Interestingly, when Prince was interviewed by Robert Hilburn of *Los Angeles Times* in 1982, he reverted back to one and two-word answers for a while. But eventually he warmed to the interchange. Hilburn recalls, "He was shy before we got going and he was shy when the formal interview ended, but he was fun to talk to."

INTERVIEWS 1976-91

Prince did a few interviews before he signed with Warner Bros. and became a solo artist. In 1976, he talked with the *Central High Pioneer*, and a year later he told a reporter in an interview with the *Minnesota Daily* that someday he would make jazz recordings under an alias. The *Central High Pioneer* interview is well-known as it has been reproduced in Per Nilsen's *Prince: A Documentary*, but we have not been able to get hold of the *Minnesota Daily* interview.

During the first couple of years in the public eye, Prince granted a number of interviews. The two first albums drew interest mainly from black soul/R&B publications and Prince gave a few interviews to magazines such as *Black Stars*, *Right On!*, as well as some newspapers, including the hometown papers.

The main portion of interviews came after the release of *Dirty Mind*, when Prince felt the need to explain himself, "People have to understand me better to understand the album. Through interviews people may be able to find out where I'm coming from and maybe get into the album a little easier."

Prince didn't do any interviews to help the sales of *Controversy*. A few interviews were set up to promote 1999 in late 1982, but Prince spoke only to Robert Hilburn of the *Los Angeles Times*, before he cancelled the other scheduled interviews.

In July 1983, the British publication *Blues & Soul* published a transcript of an interview that was said to have been broadcast on US radio earlier in the year. It is uncertain if this interview really happened or if the magazine "compiled" an interview by gathering quotes from a number of interviews. In September 1983, *Musician* published an interview by Barbara Graustark. However, the actual interview was done in 1981 during the *Dirty Mind* phase.

After the *Los Angeles Times* interview in 1982, Prince didn't speak to the press again until 1985, when he agreed to an interview with hometown reporter Neal Karlen in *Rolling Stone*. This interview, and the one he did for MTV later in 1985, were largely prompted by the negative press he was receiving in the States. Except for a brief one-off telephone interview with "Electrifying Mojo," a Detroit radio DJ in June 1986, Prince didn't talk to the media for four years, when he once again was interviewed by Neal Karlen in *Rolling Stone*. This time, the *Graffiti Bridge* film needed promotion.

Prince's attitude towards interviews, or at least "conversations," changed somewhat when *Diamonds And Pearls* was going to be released, and he made considerable efforts to promote the album. He appeared at some record industry showcases and spoke to several papers. Conversations (rather than interviews) with him appeared in *The Face*, *Black Beat*, *Sky*, and *USA Today*.

Excerpts and quotes from most of the interviews Prince has done are included in this special UPTOWN issue. We hope you'll enjoy it all! ■

A ONE-MAN BAND AND A WHOLE CHORUS, TOO

Tim Carr interviewed Prince in Owen Husney's [Prince's first manager] office when *For You* just had been released. The interview was published in *Minneapolis Tribune*, April 30th 1978. In this interview, Prince was very talkative and talked a great deal about the album and what he wanted to accomplish.

Prince was born in south Minneapolis on June 7, 1958, the son of a swing-band leader who used the stage name Prince Rogers. At the age of seven, Prince took up the piano.

I had one piano lesson and two guitar lessons as a kid. I was a poor student, because when a teacher would be trying to teach me how to play junky stuff I would start playing my own songs. I'd usually get ridiculed for it, but I ended up doing my own thing. I can't read music. It hasn't gotten in the way yet. Maybe it will later, but I doubt it.

Prince's new album vary vastly in mood, instrumental arrangement and musical genre.

I wanted to make a different-sounding record. We originally planned to use horns, but it's really hard to sound different if you use the same instruments. By not using horns on the record, I could make an album that would sound different right away. So I created a different kind of horn section by multi-tracking a synthesizer and some guitar lines.

I got hip to polymoogs (polyphonic, two-handed synthesizers) when I was here working at Sound 80. I liked them a lot then. I was trying to get away from using the conventional sound of pianos and clavichords as keyboards, as the main keyboards, so I thought I would try to use that as the main keyboard on a few songs – and it worked.

I think the main reason artists fail when they try to play all of the instruments is because, either they can't play all of the instruments really well – there is usually a flaw somewhere – or they don't play with the same intensity each track.

It's a hard project to do, but you have to pretend each time that this is going to be your only track and that you're the only guy who's going to play that instrument. So every time you go into the recording booth, you have to play like this is your only shot. If you do that, what you end up with is a whole band that is playing with the same intensity.

What Prince ended up with was indeed a very intense pop/funk sound... er...

I don't like categories at all. I'm not soul and I'm not jazz, but everyone wants to call me one or the other. The Bee Gees aren't called soul. They're pop or something.

Whatever it is to whoever is listening to it is what it is. It's hard to categorize the record, so I try not to use any categories at all. There is not one categorization that all of the tracks can fall into. Some are funk, some hard rock and roll, others like "For You" could be classical, you know?

What makes them all "Prince"?

It's hard to say. I guess it's just the basic sound. It's hard to classify Earth, Wind & Fire, for instance, but you can always tell it's them when you hear them. It's not a brand of music, it's a group sound, identity of their own. If you want EW&F, you just go out and buy them. Maybe my voice, or just my total sound, who knows? It is my album.

Now Prince is putting together a band to take with him on a national tour to promote the album.

So far I only have a bass player, André Anderson from Champagne. I'm going to New York to audition some people. I'm going to have two keyboard players on stage and have a lot of synthesizers. I'm not sure who I'll have on stage. Right now I have to try to figure out who's going to fit. I have to try and create a personality group. I'm looking forward to going out on the road; I like performing.

OUR TEEN-AGE VIRTUOSO IS HOME TO PLAY AT LAST

Jon Bream of the *Minneapolis Star* (before the paper merged with *Minneapolis Tribune* to become *Minneapolis Star Tribune*)

was one of the first music journalists to follow Prince's career. This interview was published on the day of Prince's debut as a solo performer, January 5th 1979.

The extra-ordinary one-man band will take the stage as a mere bandleader tonight and tomorrow at the Capri Theatre.

I'm nervous. I'll be terrified, because it's gonna take a while to block out the fact there are people out there. I find it extremely hard to perform for people.

I think I found it hard to sing and play in front of my band at first. But now that I got to know them better, it's really easy now and we all bounce off each other as far as energy goes. I think before I can bounce off the crowd it will take a few songs.

Prince paused and looked down, displaying the reserve that has, in the past, led him to shun interviews and public appearances.

I'm really free and open once I get to know a person. But when I first encounter something, I'm a little laid back and cautious. People constantly call me shy. I don't feel shy, but I guess I sometimes come off that way to people. Everybody at Warner Brothers has a big impression I'm really quiet. If he doesn't talk, he probably won't dance or sing too much. I have to put to rest all those accusations.

Making the transition from a one-man band to a frontman was difficult at first, but Prince says he's handling it.

It's complicated at times. It's fun when you hear it [his music] all come back with someone else's interpretation. Deep down, I can tell it's different, but sometimes on the surface it's better. It's not just me doing everything, trying to keep my energy level up at all times.

During his formative years, Prince preferred to make music rather than listen to it. His childhood was rather introverted.

I missed out on a lot, but I don't regret it. I missed out on socializing. But I get high off playing my music or going to a movie alone. I used to like to play sports, but I had to quit that. I used to want to go to college. I certainly don't have time for that. At one time, I wanted to get married and I don't have time for that. I wanted kids, too. But I don't have time for that, either. I think the things I missed out on, my mind has changed about them. I think I've done what I wanted to do in life. In teen-age life.

To help promote For You, Prince attended autograph parties.

It was weird. It was mostly kids from 11 to 20. They were relating to me being so young. There's been ads in the teen magazines and my age has really come up.

The kids would ask me if my real name is Prince, what "Soft and Wet" means, and did I really play all those instruments myself.

People expect you to be an egomaniac because of who you are. The way I am now, I was always. I supposed if I lived in California and rode in limos and had people waiting on me hand and foot, I could change. I'm not into all that.

He often thinks big, but he speaks with a soft-spoken confidence.

I do what I want to do, otherwise, this business will kill you. It [success] will happen if it's supposed to. I don't worry about it too much. What it all boils down to means nothing except love. As long as I got that, I don't need money. If

I went broke, it wouldn't faze me. Love and music. As long as I got that, everything's cool. Everything.

LOCAL TALENT HAS HEADS TURNING

Jon Bream interviewed Prince over the phone before his hometown concert at the Orpheum Theatre on the *Prince* tour. The interview was published in *Minneapolis Star*, February 6th 1980.

A lot of people don't know what to make of Prince. They don't understand his music, they don't understand the unusual outfits he wears and they don't understand how such an extraordinary young talent could come from Minneapolis.

That tripped me out when Dick Clark asked how I could come from Minneapolis, of all places. That really gave me an attitude for the rest of the

**"Love and music.
As long as I got that,
everything's cool.
Everything."**



talk. TV personalities are hard to talk to. They come out of certain bags. Music is music. A place is a place.

Like Stevie Wonder's music, Prince's material seems to elude classification. When he took his band on a brief concert tour this winter, the audiences and critics didn't quite know what to make of Prince, he says.

They didn't understand that we are trying to bridge the worlds of rock, funk, jazz and whatever. The critics were led to believe we would be laid-back because of the albums. The albums are not as fiery as the concert. Older people found it hard to get into us. The kids were the smartest. They are ready for a change. You have to tell them the truth, whether it's politics, lyrics, music, school, busing. Kids are a lot more aware.

We can't dress in three-piece suits or glitter outfits or raggedy clothes. It's basically us. I wear what I wear because I don't like clothes. This is what's most comfortable.

People should wake up and not worry about what people think about them. Like it was in the '60s. The crowds at concerts were wilder than the acts sometimes. It was live. Now it's all commercial and cool. We'll suffer a slow death like that.

Only one local radio station—a disco-oriented one—regularly played the record, but Prince didn't expect much air play here anyway.

Until radio programmers wake up to the fact that we are far behind here, people will probably want to leave if they can.

I'd play their record even if it wasn't good music. If it's good music, it's good music. I'm not saying mine is good. But if it charted, it must be good.

It surprised me that "I Wanna Be Your Love" became a hit. I basically make songs I like. And I like excitement and surprise.

THAT MYSTERIOUS PRINCE: HE TALKS ABOUT HIMSELF!

The success of "I Wanna Be Your Lover" and Prince made Prince a soul star and black US music publications such as *Right On!*, *Black Beat*, and *Rock & Soul* treated him as a new black teen heart-throb. Few of the interviews Prince gave to these publications in 1979–80 contained much of substance, as Prince probably felt they treated him as just another "pretty face" and didn't really take the music seriously. One of the more decent articles appeared in *Soul Teen*, March 1980. J. Randy Taraborrelli spoke with Prince.

Is Prince ego tripping?

No, I don't think so. It's just that when I was putting those two [Prince and For You] albums together, I didn't have a band. The ideal situation would have been to have a band back me but I didn't have one so I did it all myself.

I've got one now, and they are really hot! In fact, we've been out on the road and it's been a great experience for all of us. If everything goes all right

then I may use them on my next album.

It's been great in a lot of ways, but I just don't know if this is what I want to do. Sometimes I think it is... other times I don't.

One thing, however, is pretty certain and that's the fact that Prince does not want to be a so-called "teen-idol." In fact, he goes as far as to say that

... if it ever gets to the point where I can't concentrate on my music because I'm always dodging crowds, then I'll quit.

Prince doesn't listen to much music outside of his own recordings.

Because if I listen to other people's stuff I think of how I would have done it differently. I begin changing the whole song around in my head and that's really not fair. Whoever recorded the tune probably worked very hard on it. So rather than be critical, I just don't listen to anyone except myself. When I feel like I want to hear music, I rehearse.

I live for my music, for the time being. But there's no telling what I might do if I get bored with it. Maybe I'll go into art. Who knows. Or I might do just anything. Whatever I do is gonna be good. It'll be the best I have to give... whether it's in music or something else. I always do the ultimate to make sure that I always come across positively. All the time...

MORE THAN JUST A "DIRTY MIND"

Dennis Hunt's phone conversation with Prince was first published in *Los Angeles Times*, December 21st 1980. The *Dirty Mind* album had been released and music journalists were intrigued by the high-powered blend of funk and rock and Prince's forthright lyrics. The *Los Angeles Times* interview was syndicated and appeared in several US newspapers in early 1981.

When he was a precocious nine-year-old in Minneapolis, Prince used to sneak into his mother's bedroom and read her spicy novels.

They were underneath the *Better Homes and Gardens* and places like that. Once I got tired of reading those stories, I wrote my own. For a while I thought that's what I wanted to do in life. But I realized as I got a little older I wasn't going to make any money writing those novels. I think I would have been a failure at writing them. I think reading those novels has a lot to do with my sexuality and my openness about it. I think it affects you when you have a very early awareness about sexual issues.

Prince was interviewed by phone in Charleston, South Carolina. Unlike just about every other artist, he prefers phone interviews.

I would wonder what it would be like if you were sitting here with me? I don't seem shy now but I would if you were here. I'm really shy when I meet someone for the first time. I like to listen. I think other people are more interesting than I am. An interview means I have to do all the talking.

Until the last few months, Prince had done very few interviews. As a result a Prince mystique sprang up.

When people couldn't talk to me or find out much about me, they started making things up. I'm supposed to be a mysterious person but I'm not mysterious.

But he's talking to the media mainly to help people understand Dirty Mind.

I never thought the album would get a lot of airplay. Maybe I can help those who buy it to understand it better. Anyway, it's time I stepped forward and started making myself heard. I've been spilling my guts more to the media than I ever have to my friends. They'll find out things from these interviews they didn't know about.

One reason Prince is so dedicated to music is that as a child in Minneapolis, singing and playing piano was his refuge against an unhappy, scattered home life.

I have four brothers and sisters by different fathers and mothers. We were never an immediate family. When I was 12 I ran away for the first time because of problems with my stepfather. I went to live with my real father but that didn't last too long because he's as stubborn as I am. I lived with my aunt for a while. I was constantly running from family to family. It was nice on one hand because I always had a new family, but I didn't like being shuffled around. I was bitter for a while but I adjusted.

My dad is black and Italian. My mom is a mixture of a bunch of things. I don't consider myself part of any race. I'm just a human being, I suppose.

He speculated that he was named Prince for an odd reason.

I think my father was kind of lashing out at my mother when he named me Prince.



His mother didn't like his interest in music, he recalled.

I was into it a little too much for her. My father left home when I was seven. That's when I got into music. She didn't like that because music is what broke up her marriage. My father was too serious about music.

I was considered strange. I recall having a lot of strange dreams. I spent a lot of time alone. I turned to music. In some ways it was more important than people.

A self-taught musician, he plays every instrument on his albums.

I learned how to play so many things out of boredom. I got bored with one and then I'd go on and learn something else.

Prince is one of those Jekyll-and-Hyde types. Offstage he's shy; onstage he's a torrid performer.

I don't say that much on stage. I'm still shy on stage. But it's easy because it's music. I'm just interpreting music, which is still the one thing in life I feel good about.

WILL THE LITTLE GIRLS UNDERSTAND?

The first article on Prince in the influential *Rolling Stone* was published February 19th 1981. Tracing Prince's background and discussing his penchant for writing sexually explicit lyrics, the article did much to focus the attention on Prince as a cross-over artist. The interview was conducted by Bill Adler.

At age 20, Prince may be the unluckiest rock star, black or white, in recent memory.

I grew up on the borderline. I had a bunch of white friends, and I had a bunch of black friends. I never grew up in one particular culture.

Oddly, he claims that the normalcy and remoteness of Minneapolis provided just the artistic nourishment he needed.

We basically got all the new music and dances three months late, so I just decided that I was gonna do my own thing. Otherwise, when we did split Minneapolis, we were gonna be way behind and dated. The white radio stations were mostly country, and the one black radio station was really boring to me. For that matter, I didn't have a record player when I was growing up, and I never got a chance to check out Hendrix and the rest of them because they were dead by the time I was really getting serious. I didn't even start playing guitar until 1974.

With his taste for outlandish clothes and his "lunatic" friends, Prince says he took a lot of heat.

People would say something about our clothes or the way we looked or who we were with, and we'd end up fighting. I was a very good fighter. I never lost. I don't know if I fight fair, but I go for it. That's what "Uptown" is about – we do whatever we want, and those who cannot deal with it have a problem within themselves.

Dirty Mind was made in isolation in Minneapolis.

Nobody knew what was going on, and I became totally engulfed in it. It really felt like me for once. When I brought it to the record company it shocked a lot of people. But they didn't ask me to go back and change anything, and I'm really grateful. Anyway, I wasn't being deliberately provocative. I was being deliberately me.

Obviously, judging by the polished eclecticism of Dirty Mind, being himself is

the best course.

I ran away from home when I was 12. I've changed addresses in Minneapolis 32 times, and there was a great deal of loneliness. But when I think about it, I know I'm here for a purpose, and I don't worry about it so much.

PRINCE EXPLAINS HIS ROYAL SECRETS

Dennis Wilen's interview with Prince was published in *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* in March 1981 when Prince was touring behind *Dirty Mind*.

Although he is shy in person, choosing words carefully and barely speaking above a whisper, Prince loves being on stage.

When I was younger, I was in a lot of bands, but it's quite different now. It's a real powerful feeling – not the kind of power that you have over anyone else, but the power that's going on around and through me.

First of all, my amp is really loud, and my guitar player's is twice as loud. When you're playing for 17,000 people and they get to screaming, then that's really, really loud. Maybe that's the kind of power that could change things. If everybody could funnel their energies into one positive source... well, that much power, it's just amazing.

And what responsibility comes with this power?

No responsibility. I think I'm only a conductor of whatever electricity comes from the world, or wherever we all come from. To me the ultimate responsibility is the hardest one – the responsibility to be true to myself.

Prince cut most of Dirty Mind as demos.

Basically, these are demo tapes, and I had no idea they'd be on an album together, so that's where I think a lot of the up-front quality comes from. I didn't have any lyrics written out for some of the tunes – they just came. I recorded at a lot of small eight and 16-track studios around Minneapolis – just personal songs that I wanted to have – and I don't think it's dirty.

I got a new guitar before I made the record, and I started to play more one it, rather than just filling up space with other instruments.

Prince's no-holds-barred lyrical approach grew out of the demo-genesis of the album.

When I made these songs, I knew they would never be on the radio, and I'd never be bringing them to Warner Bros. – some of them, anyway. Then I decided that this was gonna be the record. I was so adamant about it, once I got to the label, that there was no way they could even say "we won't put this out." I believed in it too much by that time.

The one thing that's strange to me about doing interviews behind this record is that it was made with nothing in mind but dealing with songs and ideas that I was about at that time. I wasn't gearing myself toward anything except my own personal satisfaction.

A DIRTY MIND COMES CLEAN

Describing Prince as part of a black new wave, the rock-oriented *New York Rocker* carried a lengthy interview with Prince in June 1981. The interview was conducted by Andy Schwartz.

I know something about your early bands. But I'm curious to know how you learned your way around the studio well enough to make these albums all by yourself.

I basically learned with two tape recorders, two cassette recorders. That taught me how to mix harmonies and run harmonies together, to play along with myself.

Did music run in your family?

Well, my father was a musician, he headed his own big band, playing around the Midwest and stuff, and my mother sang for the band. He left when I was seven, so music left with him. But he did leave his piano, and that's when I started learning how to play.

Was your mother supportive of your musical aspirations?

No. She wanted me to go to school, go to college – she sent me to a bunch



of different schools. I always had a pretty high academic level, I guess. She always tried to send me to the best schools, but that was pretty much my second interest. I didn't really care about that as much as I did about playing. I think music is what broke her and my father up, and I don't think she wanted that for me. Musicians, depending on how serious they are, they're really moody. Sometimes they need a lotta space, they want everything just right sometimes, y'know. My father was a great deal like that, and my mother didn't give him a lotta space. She wanted a husband per se.

What kind of "space" do you need to make music, to write songs?

It used to be I'd have to be totally isolated to write things, because a lotta things I wrote concerned different visions and dreams and fantasies I had. But lately I have to be around people, I have to see different places and stuff like that. I just walk through life, I guess. You know, it's interesting – if I try to get myself away from being a musician and just, you know, live life, I can write much better. Different things happen, you run into different relationships...

I guess that's why so many performers seem to do their best work at the earliest stage of their careers, before they become "professional musicians" working on a schedule set by the record company and the demands of an audience. Your input changes, your sources change.

That's really true. This last album [*Dirty Mind*], I wasn't even working during the time it was done – I wasn't sure this was what I really wanted to do. When I'm not touring, I like just to hang.

When you have the time, are you a fan of music? Do you listen to a lot of records, buy a lot of records?

No, I just get what Warner Bros. sends me, but I don't listen to very much.

Are there any records of the last few months or year that struck you as particularly exciting or special?

I wish there was, but I guess if there were we wouldn't be in the slump we are in the music business.

Do you think that's the problem? That the music itself isn't bringing people into record stores and concerts the way it once did?

Yeah. I think they're getting hip to the fact that musicians are becoming too business-oriented, too much into the money aspect of it. It's turned so commercial – it's beginning to get like Saran Wrap, and people are getting hip to it. And until it gets back to the street, I don't think it's gonna pick up.

Do you think too many musicians are sitting down to write songs purely on the basis of what radio will play and what they think will sell?

Exactly. Owen used to tell me a lotta times that when he was growing up there weren't really fads, y'know, musical fads, fashion fads, things like that. That when he was coming up, people were trying to do something different from the next cat. I guess that's probably how psychedelic music came into being, because everybody was trying to be so out and crazy, it just went overboard. But I think that's the way to be, because it's coming from inside instead of "okay, this is what's happening and I'm gonna do this."

You were 17 years old, had no band as such, and didn't live in a major music-biz city. How did you get signed?

See, I had originally gone to New York, and I got two offers when I came out here to live with my sister. The only problem there was I didn't have a cat in there fighting for me, to get me artistic control over the production end of it. Owen was convinced that no one could produce a record of mine but me. I don't know whether I really agreed with him at the time, but I know I believed in his gusto, in his belief. I didn't know if I was old enough or smart enough – it sounded like a big term, y'know, "producer" of an album. I didn't know it really mean that much at all.

Do you think the producer is an overrated figure in music today?

Well, a lotta records today are producer's records. To me it doesn't mean anything, because I don't believe in any act, really, which has to rely on a producer. What happens if the cat dies? There you go, there goes your sound – you obviously didn't have one. The producer bakes the whole cake... and that's probably why I don't listen to music. The artist is singing songs he didn't even write.

This tour and this album may change things, but your records and concert tickets are still bought mostly by black people. How do you feel about the restrictions, particularly in radio, on musicians who happen to be black – as opposed to musicians whose sound can be more easily classified as "disco" or "R&B" or "funk"? Like this

Village Voice article asks, "Will rock stallions in 1981 play Prince like they played Jimi Hendrix and Sly Stone in 1971?"

Well, I don't know, music has changed so much since then. It's gotten pretty well segregated now... I think it's gonna come from the people, it's gonna be whatever they wanna hear and how much support they put behind what I do. With the jocks coming to check us out – I mean, it's gotta be a matter of taste, not doing it because they did it in 1971, but because they wanna do it and they feel it fits. I can sense the restrictions that come up, as far as our concerts and radio is concerned, but it doesn't really bother me. People are gonna come and see what they want, they'll buy what they want – I don't basically worry about it too much.

The record's not doing phenomenally well sales-wise, and airplay is pretty minimal, so I don't worry about it much. What money is made usually goes back into our stage show and to support everybody. You gotta do what you feel and hope it gets to as many people as it can.

How about your stage show? Like don't you think you look a little silly to some people when you're up there in a jockstrap?

Maybe to people who only read about it, but I think the people who come to see it already expect it and wanna get into that. I've gotten a lot of criticism from outsiders, but once they see the show they understand why I wear what I wear. The show's real athletic and we run around a lot, and I have to be real comfortable. The decision was left up to me, and when I thought about what I was most comfortable in, it's what I sleep in... I just can't stand clothes.

Where do you go from here?

Well, radio or not radio, we're just gonna keep playing until enough people hear us, that's all. I don't care if it sells so much as I want people to understand it, to give them the chance to see and hear it. Just from talking to kids on the street and people I meet – a lotta people didn't even know the songs, you could tell 'cause they weren't singing along, but we had their attention. They never turned away. That means more to me than them running out and buying. I just want them to listen, that's all.

POSIN' TILL CLOSIN'

Prince visited Amsterdam, London and Paris in late May to early June 1981 for a short promotional trip. In England, all three weekly music papers interviewed Prince. Although it was quite obvious to the British journalists that Prince wasn't too fond of being interviewed, they managed to get some interesting answers. This interview by Tony Mitchell, one of the first British critics to discover Prince, was published in *Sounds*, June 6th 1981.

Dirty Mind is not an album you'll be hearing on the radio.

It doesn't bother me. Since the album was released I've learned to live with it. I only write from experience. I don't plan to shock people. I write about things I guess people are afraid to talk about.

So how did the album come about?

I think I matured in a sense. I reached puberty, I got new management, I got a new guitar which brought life into the sound of the album – most of the songs were written on guitar. The second album was written mostly on the piano.

Was it a conscious effort to move away from disco influences?

No, nothing's conscious. I don't sit down and plan anything. I was too young really, I was in diapers, I didn't hear much. All I heard was my dad pounding away on his piano downstairs. He was a jazz band leader and my mother was a singer.

I had an executive producer when I did the first two albums but the last one I did all on my own; it's more me. I wasn't thinking, I was just singing and playing... so I guess I sort of found myself. I think all artists should produce themselves, I really do. I mean I don't know how someone else can be in the same frame of mind – unless they eat and sleep with the person.

You still live in Minneapolis, so you haven't found the attraction of New York or Los Angeles irresistible?

There are too many plastic bags in L.A. Sometimes when I'm in a certain mental state I can get into New York, but I'm not always like that. It's hard to be passionate in that city.

Will people expect your next album to be more excessive than Dirty Mind – will they get it?

Aha – that's hard to say. Depends what frame of mind I'm in. I haven't met anyone for a long time so, er, I find it hard to write when I don't have anything to write about. I've been pretty much alone and I haven't gone anywhere cos we haven't played. Now that I'm out on the road and I've met you and other people... I get ideas. I don't just wanna sit in the house alone and make up these nasty vulgar songs and put 'em out – I'd rather wait until I have something to write about.

Why have your previous albums been solo efforts?

When I'm recording I could have orgasms on my mind and my bass player could have pickles on his. It makes it a little rough when you listen back to a track and it's not played with the same intensity.

But the hypothetical ideal of a band of six Princes doesn't appeal?

No, we'd probably argue. We'd all want the same girlfriends. But the band are all learning more about one another's personalities and everything, and in time hopefully we'll be thinking as one or two or three rather than six different individuals.

What do you think about Bette Bright's version of "When You Were Mine"?

I like it a lot. It was really kind of thrilling to hear someone else do one of my songs for the first time.

HALF A MILLION DIRTY MINDS CAN'T BE WRONG ABOUT THIS MAN

Chris Salewicz's interview with Prince was published in the *New Musical Express*, June 6th 1981.

Prince dislikes suggestions that he is re-defining R&B. Or that his first two, less cohesive albums were an interpretation of disco in rock terms.

To me disco was always *very* contrived music. It was all completely planned out for when the musicians were recording it in the studios. Basically, what I do is just go in and play.

It's easy for me to work in the studio, because I have no worries or doubts about what the other musician's going to play because that other musician is almost always *me*! All the other musicians on the record are me. Disco music was filled with breaks that a studio musician would just play and fill up when his moment came. But I don't do that at all – I just play along with the other guy.

All the groups in America seem to do just exactly the same as each other – which is to get on the radio, try to be witty, say the most sickening things they can think of and gross out the interviewer. They think that's going to make them big and cool.

They're a little too concerned, with keeping up the payment on the Rolls Royce when really they should be busying themselves with doing something that's true to their own selves. Obviously the new wave thing has brought back a lot of that greater reality. There are so many of those groups that there is just no way many of them can make it in those vast commercial terms. So they have no choice but write what's inside of them.

Up until when he graduated from high school, Prince played in a succession of bands.

It was all Top 40 stuff. The audiences didn't want to know the songs I was writing for the group. They'd just cover their faces... largely because of the

lyrics. I remember I had this song called "Machine" that was about this girl that reminded me of a machine. It was very explicit about her, umhhh... parts. People seemed to find it very hard to take.

There was quite a lot of Sly Stone stuff we used to do. I really liked it when he'd have a hit, because it would give us an excuse to play them.

Listening to the radio really turned me off a lot of things that were supposedly going on. If they did pick up on something they'd just play it to death, and you'd end up totally disliking it. So I missed out on a lot of groups.



It was his need to extend the autonomy he'd already gained in production terms that led Prince to breaking with his Minneapolis-based management.

I think I've always been the same. But when you're in the hands of other people they can package it in a way that is more... umhhh... *acceptable*. All along I've had the same sort of ideas that came out on this record. It's just that my former management had other thoughts about it all.

The songs on *Dirty Mind* were originally just some demo tapes that I recorded and took to LA to play to my new management. Even they weren't too happy with them. We also had long talks about what I felt was me getting closer to my real image, and at first they thought that I'd gone off the deep end and had lost my mind. Warners basically thought the same, I think.

But once I told them that this was the way it was, then they knew they had no choice and they'd have to try it, because they weren't going to get another record out of me otherwise.

I know that I'm a lot happier than I was. Because I'm getting away with what I want to do. With the other two albums I feel I was being forced to suppress part of myself – though also I was younger.

I was in a lot of different situations when I was coming up to make *Dirty Mind*. A lot of anger came up through the songs. It was kind of a rough time. There were a few anti-draft demonstrations going on that I was involved in that spurred me to write "Partyup".

Really, that song is just about people who'd rather have a good time than go and shoot up one another. That's all – it's pretty basic. I just seem to read about a lot of politicians who're all going to die soon and I guess they want to go out heavy, because they're prepared to make a few mistakes and end up starting a war that they don't have to go out and fight.

I just think the people should have a little more to say in some of these foreign matters. I don't want to have to go out and die for their mistakes.

This grabbing of greater control was probably inevitable, considering the production and arrangement autonomy Prince already had.

I just turned down all the producers that Warner suggested to me for the first album. Even when they finally agreed to let me produce myself they insisted I had to work with what they said was an Executive Producer, who was really just an engineer. And that caused a whole lot of other problem, because he was versed in short-cuts and I didn't want to take any – though that *was* why it took five months to make.

The recording's become a little easier these days. I used to be a perfectionist – too much of one. Those ragged edges tend to be a bit truer.

SOME DAY YOUR PRINCE WILL COME

Steve Sutherland talked "dirty with royalty" in *Melody Maker*, June 6th 1981.

The quiet little man with bovine, brown eyes and a whisper of a 'tache stares absent-mindedly out of the hotel window across London's rain-swept rooftops.

Actually, I think it's much more embarrassing talking about these things than doing them. I mean, I find it a lot easier to sing swear words than to say them and when I first had a girl, I found it really hard to tell my mother but, Lord knows, I didn't feel embarrassed while I was doing it to her.

He calls upon his past, almost endowing it with some spiritual significance, as he struggles to explain his motives behind his music.

I saw an analyst once because I was wondering why I was so sexual-minded and why I wanted to go against the grain so much because it got me into a lotta trouble a lotta times. He asked me to talk about my childhood y'know, "when you first experienced this and first experienced that?" I realized that, when I was young, I used to read my mother's dirty novels and I was more taken with them than anything – it was a lot better than comic books.

It was a revelation recording this last album. I realized that I could write just what was on my mind and things that I'd encountered and I didn't have to hide anything. The lyric on the new album is straight from the heart whereas the other albums were more feelings, more dreams and fantasies and they stuck to the more basic formulas that I'd learned through playing top 40 material in old bands. That's probably why they were so big but that's really upsetting for me because you say to yourself, "Well, do I just wanna be real big or do I wanna do something I'll be proud of and really enjoy playing?"

"I Wanna Be Your Lover," was a big hit off the second album, but it was hard for me to play that song after a while. I'll never get sick of playing the stuff from the *Dirty Mind* album because I'll always remember what state of mind I was enduring the time it was recorded.

The frankness of Dirty Mind was bound to keep it off the radio, but the subsequent notoriety ensured the sales and anyway, according to Prince:

The sales weren't important. There were points, I must admit, on the first two albums where I was writing to get a hit but that was too easy. I don't like to do things that's easy – it's more of a challenge for me to write exactly what happens, exactly what I feel at that particular time. If I think a certain thought and I put it down on paper exactly like I hear it in my head, that's a challenge to me as a writer.

More than my songs have to do with sex, they have to do with one human's love for another which goes deeper than anything political that anybody could possibly write about. The need for love, the need for sexuality, basic freedom, equality... I'm afraid these things don't necessarily come out. I think my problem is that my attitude's so sexual that it overshadows anything else. I might not be mature enough as a writer to bring it all out yet.

I'm gonna stop this soon. I don't expect to make many more records for the simple reason that I wanna see my life change. I wanna be there when it changes, I don't wanna just be doing what's expected of me. I just wanna live... until it's time to die...

MIXED EMOTIONS: PRINCE ON THE MUSIC

Prince's management and Warner Bros. convinced Prince that some strategic interviews at the time of the release of 1999 would boost the sales of the album. Reluctantly, Prince committed himself to a series of interviews with the press. However, as it became apparent that 1999 was taking off without any promotion at all, Prince spoke only to *Los Angeles Times*' Robert Hilburn, and then cancelled all other scheduled meetings. The interview was published November 21st 1982 in *Los Angeles Times*.

I liked your first two albums, but it seemed to me that the third record, Dirty Mind, was really a growth...

Yes. The second record was pretty contrived. After the first record, I put myself in a hole, because I'd spent a lot of money to make it. With the second record, I wanted to remedy all that, so I just made it a "hit" album. I usually write hits for other people, and those are the songs I throw away and don't really care for. *Dirty Mind* started off as demo tapes; they were just like songs

inside that I wanted to hear. So I took it to my manager and he said, "This is the best stuff I've heard in a long time. This should be your album." The drag is that I don't know how I could make another album like that. I usually change directions with each record, which is a problem in some respects, but rewarding and fulfilling for me. I have mixed emotions.

The fourth record, Controversy, sounds more new wave.

It depends a lot on what instrument I write on. When I write on guitar, I come up with songs like "When You Were Mine" and "Ronnie Talks To Russia." When I start with drums, I get "Controversy." *Controversy* is a little erratic. I'm really proud of this new album (1999).

Did you resist the idea of 1999 being a double album?

Yes. I didn't want to do a double record, but I just kept on writing. Of course, I'm not one for editing. I did try to shorten things.

How do you prepare to go into the studio? Do you have rough ideas...?

I don't plan or anything like that. When I record, I find if I usually just sit down and do something, I'll gradually come up with something. Sometimes it starts with a lyric.

Is it easier to work alone rather than with others?

Oh, much easier. I have a communication problems sometimes when I'm trying to describe music.

Were you always a musical loner?

When I first started, I always had buddies around me. I never wanted to be a front man. It felt spooky to be at the mike alone. I had a bad habit of just thinking of myself – if I just moved constantly, then people would think I was comfortable. But that wasn't right.

When did you finally become comfortable performing?

Last year, on the *Controversy* tour. There was something about coming down the pole and going out in front. I felt real comfortable.

What was the incident at the Stones' Coliseum show when you left the stage early?

When we went onstage, there were a lot of people throwing things and making noises and stuff. At first I thought it was fun, okay, and then I thought, "Well, we just better play." Dez, my guitar player, is just a rock 'n' roller at heart and he said, "Show 'em we can play, and then it'll simmer down." But there was this one dude right in front and I looked down at him – you could see the hatred all over his face. He wouldn't stop throwing things. And the reason that I left was I didn't want to play anymore. I just wanted to fight him. I got really angry. It's like I'm feeling, "Look, I got twenty minutes. If you can't deal with that, well, we'll have to go outside and work it out." You know? How dare you throw something at me?

Many songwriters use the word "love" to mean other things such as ambition or goal or talent. Is the word "sex" almost interchangeable sometimes?

Yes, I think everything basically is. Like in "Lady Cab Driver," for example, "sex" is used in two different contexts. One is anger.

Does that imply an S & M kind of thing? A lot of people might perceive that from the record.

Well, that's up to them. I don't want to burst anybody's bubble, but the idea was that a lot of people make love out of loneliness sometimes.

And they want to be touched in reassurance?

Yes, exactly. It just went from anger and you start saying, "Well, how long can this go on? This is a person here. I have to be human." The right spot was hit so...

Do you enjoy being in the studio?

Yes. There's nothing like the feeling after you've done something and play it back and you know that you'll never hear anything like it and that they'll never figure it out – I'm sorry, I know what that sounds like. When I say "figure it out," I mean something like I'll try to go so high and so jagged with my voice that if anybody tries to do it their tonsils will fall out. I don't try to trick people. Life is too confusing itself, and I wouldn't put any more on anybody else. Now everybody's worried about the fact that I can't use engineers.

You can't use engineers?!

No, they drive me crazy. It's because they're so technical. Everything just got so esoteric, "We've got to do this a certain way," when you're ready to play. The engineer I use and give credit to on the album, she sets everything up for me, most of the time before I come in. And then I just do what I have

to do and split. She puts things together afterward.

I once heard you described as a child prodigy.

Don't. That's all fabricated evidence that the management did to make it happen. I don't want to say that I was anything less than what they thought, but I just did it as sort of a hobby, and then it turned into a job and just a way to eat, and now I do it as art.

STRANGE TALES FROM ANDRÉ'S BASEMENT... AND OTHER FANTASIES COME TRUE

Barbara Graustark interviewed Prince early 1981 when the controversial nature of *Dirty Mind* was turning Prince into hot copy. However, the interview wasn't made public until September 1983, when it was published in *Musician*. Apart from the two *Rolling Stone* interviews, 1985 and 1990, it is one of the longest interviews Prince has ever given.



MISUNDERSTOOD

Let me start off with the question, to me at least, Dirty Mind seems to be the antithesis of what sex should be. Or is it? Why was that album called Dirty Mind?

Well, that was kind of a put-on... I wanted to put it out there that way and in time show people that's not what sex was about. You can say a bad word over and over again and sooner or later it won't be bad anymore if everybody starts doing it.

Are songs like "Head" and "Sister" serious or satiric?

"Sister" is serious. "Head" could be taken as satire. No one's laughing when I'm saying it so I don't know. If people get enjoyment out of it and laugh, that's fine. All the stuff on the record is true experiences and things that have occurred around me and the way I feel about things. I wasn't laughing when I did it. So I don't suppose it was intended that way.

That's why I stopped doing interviews. I started and I stopped abruptly because of that. People weren't taking me seriously and I was being misunderstood. Everything I said they didn't believe anyway. They didn't believe my name. They didn't believe anything.

We should try and be as straight as possible with each other so I know that what you're saying is being interpreted correctly.

Okay. I tell the truth about everything but my last name. I just hate it. I know how it's just the name that he [Prince's father] had to go through life with, and he hated it too. So that's why he gave me this name and that's why he changed his when he went onstage. I just don't like it and just really would rather not have it out. It's just a stupid name that means nothing to my ancestry, my father and what he was about.

Was your father very much there when you were growing up?

Well, up until the time I was seven he was very much there. Then he was very much away. Then I went to live with him once... I ran away the first time when I was 12. And then he worked two jobs. He worked a day job and then he worked downtown playing behind strippers. So he was away and I didn't see him much then, only while he was shaving or something like that. We didn't talk so much then.

Did he have any feelings about you being a musician? Was he a supportive person?

I don't think so because he didn't think I was very good. I didn't really think so either. When I finally got a band together he used to come and watch us play every once in a while. But he finds it really hard to show emotion. I find that true of most men and it's kind of a drag, but...

Is your father a good musician? What does he play?

Piano. The reason he's good is that he's totally... he can't stand any music other than his. He doesn't listen to anybody. And he's really strange. He told me one time that he has dreams where he'd see a keyboard in front of his

eyes and he'd see his hands on the keyboard and he'd hear a melody. And he can get up and it can be like 4:30 a.m. and he can walk right downstairs to his piano and play the melody. And to me that's amazing because there's no work involved really; he's just given a gift in each song. He never comes out of the house unless it's to get something to eat and he goes right back in and plays all the time. His music... one day I hope you'll get to hear it. It's just—it sounds like nothing I've ever heard.

GETTING INTO MUSIC

How did you get into music? Where were you? What were you doing?

I was at home living with my mother and my sister, and he had just gone and left his piano. He didn't allow anybody to play it when he was there because we would just bang on it. So once he left then I started doing it because nobody else would. Everything was cool I think, until my father left, and then it got kinda hairy. My step-dad came along when I was nine or ten, and I disliked him immediately, because he dealt with a lot of materialistic things. He would bring us a lot of presents all the time, rather than sit down and talk with us and give us companionship. I got real bitter because of that, and I would say all the things that I disliked about him, rather than tell him what I really needed. Which was a mistake, and it kind of hurt our relationship.

I don't think they wanted me to be a musician. But I think it was mainly because of my father, who disliked the idea that he was a musician, and it really broke up their life. I think that's why he probably named me what he named me, it was like a blow to her—"He's gonna grow up the same way, so don't even worry about him." And that's exactly what I did.

I was about 13 when I moved away. I didn't really realize other music until I had to. And that was when I got my own band and we had to play top forty songs. Anything that was a hit, didn't matter who it was. We played everything because we were playing for white and black audiences at the time. Minneapolis is mostly white anyway.

Do you feel a strong identification with anything... anybody?

No. I think society says if you've got a little black in you that's what you are. I don't.

When you moved away, did you move in with your father?

Well, that was when I went to live with my aunt, also in Minneapolis, because I couldn't stay at my father's. And my father wouldn't get me a piano, it was too much or whatever, so... he got me a guitar. I didn't learn to play the right way, because I tuned it to a straight A chord so it was really strange. When I first started playing guitar, I just did chords and things like that, and I didn't really get into soloing and all that until later, when I started making records. I can't think of any foremost great guitarist that stuck in my mind. It was just solos on records, and it was just dumb stuff, I hated top forty. Everybody in the band hated it. It was what was holding us back. And we were trying to escape it. But we had to do it to make enough money to make demo tapes.

ANDRÉ'S BASEMENT

How did you get to André Cymone's cellar?

André Cymone's house was the last stop after going from my dad's to my aunt's, to different homes and going through just a bunch of junk. And once I got there, I had realized that I was going to have to play according to the program, and do exactly what was expected of me. And I was 16 at the time, getting ready to turn 17.

Were you still in high school?

Mm-hm. And, that was another problem. I wasn't doing well in school, and I was going to have to. Otherwise the people around me were going to get very upset. I could come in anytime I wanted. I could have girls spend the night, and it didn't make a difference. I think it had a great deal to do with me coming out into my own, and discovering myself. I mean, the music was interesting at that time, once I got out of high school.

Did you finish?

Yeah. Because I got all the required credits. And that's relatively early. In about two and a half years, or something like that. It was pretty easy and stupid. To this day, I don't use anything that they taught me. Get your jar, and dissect frogs and stuff like that.

How did you support yourself?

Well, that was the problem. Once I got out of high school it was interesting for a while because I didn't have any money. I didn't have any school, and I didn't have any dependents, I didn't have any kids, or girlfriends, or anything. I had cut myself off totally from everything. And that's when I really started writing. I was writing like three or four songs a day. And, they were all really long. Which is interesting for me as a writer, because it's hard to just take a thought, and continue it for a long period of time without losing it. And it's harder for me now to write than it was back then, because there's so many people around me now. I wrote a lot of sexual songs back then, but they were mainly things that I *wanted* to go on, not things that *were* going on. Which is different from what I write about now.

How does André Cymone fit into all of this? Was he there at the beginning, and then you went to New York and came back, and resumed the friendship?

Well, what happened was, before I went to New York we lost our friendship, because he was in the band with me at the time, and I asked them all what they wanted to do, "Do you want to stay here, or do you want to go to New York?" And André didn't speak up, but everyone else was against it. No one wanted to do it. They liked their lifestyle, I guess. I don't think they really liked the idea of me trying to manipulate the band so much. I was always trying to get us to do something different, and I was always teamed up on for that. Like, in an argument or something like that, or fight, or whatever... it was always me against them. That's when I wrote "Soft And Wet," which was the first single I put out. I really liked the tune, but everyone thought it was filthy, and "you didn't have no business doing stuff without us, anyway." I just did what I wanted to. And that was it.

Was the scene back then in the basement a heterosexual scene? Was it homosexual?

No, everything was heterosexual. I didn't know any homosexuals, no. There was one guy who walked around in women's clothes, but we didn't know *why* he did it, we just thought it was funny, and that was that. Some things don't dawn on you for a long time. And now I hear, like... Minneapolis is supposed to be like... the third largest gay city in the country, or whatever. Huge.

IN NEW YORK

Were you ready for New York when you came?

Yeah. I was ready for anything. I felt disgusted with my life in Minneapolis.

What'd you do when you got here? Did you know you were gonna live with your sister?

Mm-hm. When I called her and told her what had happened, she said, well come here and I'll help you. And I came. She had a great personality. You know, all my friends were girls, okay? I didn't have any male friends, because they were just cheap, so I knew then that if she used her personality and her sensitivity she could get us a deal. That didn't mean going to bed with anybody, it just meant that... you know, use your charm rather than trying to go in there and be this man, because you're not.

And then my sister was introduced to this one guy who had a band. And, I don't know how she got this, but it was really cool. She ended up talking to this guy and found out everything he did, and found out that he had a demo and he was gonna take it to this woman named Danielle. And he was gonna try to get his band signed to her. So we all went together, and she said, "Can my little brother come in?" And she said sure. So we were all sitting there, and Danielle said, "Alright, put your tape on." So he put on the tape of his band. That tape was pretty terrible, and Danielle said so, and the guy started making excuses, saying, "Well, that's not the real guitar player, or the real singers, so don't worry about it." And she said, "Well, why did you bring a tape that doesn't have the real musicians?"

Then my sister started telling Danielle about me and finally asked me to sing. And I said no [laughs]. And she said, "Why not?" And I said, "Because I'm scared." And she said, "You don't have to be scared." And they turned the lights down, and it was really strange. That same day I had just written

"Baby," and I didn't really have it all together, but I sang the melody and she really liked my voice. She said, "I don't care what you do, just hum, because I just want to hear you sing." So that's what I did, just started singing and humming, and making up words and really stupid stuff.

Were you singing in your upper register then?

I only sang like that back then because, I don't know... it hurt... it hurt my voice to sing in the lower register. I couldn't make it, I couldn't peak songs the way I wanted to, and things like that, so I never used it.

Oh! I would think it would hurt to sing in a falsetto.

Well, not for me. I wish it was that way, but...

Did Danielle sign you to a contract?

Well, she wanted to start working with me immediately. Nevertheless, this guy was pretty upset that he didn't get his band in there. He and my sister fell out right away, but she didn't care. And that's what I dug about her. So, I talked with Danielle, and she told me to come over to her apartment. She was very beautiful, too, which made everything a lot easier, I remember that about her. And she made me bring all my songs, and we went through 'em all, and she didn't like any of 'em.

How'd that sound to you?

I didn't care. You know, I was cool with it. All I wanted to do was play a couple of instruments on it, and let it say on the album that I played something. And she said no, unless I could play better than the session guy, which I didn't think I could do if a guy was gonna sit there and read the chart, and I was going to get aced out right away. So that didn't materialize. Anyway... after I finished that, that's when me and my sister kinda had a dispute.

About what?

Mainly money. I had nothing; I was running up sort of a bill there, at her place, and she wanted me to sell my publishing for like \$380 or something like that - which I thought was kind of foolish. And I kept telling her that I could get my own publishing company. I didn't care about money. I just didn't care about money. And, I don't know, I never have, because... the one time I did have it was when my step-dad lived there, and I know I was extremely bitter then.

And did you have to go back to Minneapolis?

I didn't *have* to, which was nice. Danielle knew this was gonna happen sooner or later. It was all really interesting to me back then, and I kind of would have liked to have seen what would have happened if she had managed me.

What did happen? Why didn't she?

Well, when I got back to Minneapolis, that's when I first met Owen Husney. I had been talking to him over the phone, and all he kept saying was that he thought I was really great, and that...

Um... when you came back and started working with Owen, what did he do? Did he get the contract for you with Warner Bros.?

Owen believed in me, he really did. First of all, nobody believed I could play all the instruments.

"I think society says if you've got a little black in you that's what you are. I don't."

RECORDING

It must have been a battle with the record company to produce and arrange.

Well, I got a couple of offers and the only difference between Warner Bros. and the others was that they didn't want to let me do production, they didn't want to let me play anything on the records. Warners had a lot of problems with it at first but Owen was fighting for control for me. They made me do a demo tape. So I did it, and they said that's pretty good. Do another one, and so I did another one. Then they said, "Okay, we can produce your album." And they waited a week to call me back and they said I couldn't. I had to go through that process a few more times. Then finally they said okay. It was kind of frustrating at first but I got used to it.

To some degree in the earlier days I was listening to Owen and the company. I didn't want to create any waves because I was brand new, and stuff like that. But now I feel that I'm going to have to do exactly what's on my mind and be exactly the way I am. Otherwise sooner or later down the road I'm going to be in a corner sucking my thumb or something. I don't want to lose it. I just want to do what I'm really about.

Did you know what you wanted to do when you started out? When you got that contract with Warner Bros., and they said to go into the studio and do it?

I had an idea, but it was really vague, and I think that had to do with... at least, with having such a big budget. It was really big – over \$100,000. You're supposed to go in and do an album for \$60,000. But I went in and kept going, and kept going and kept going. I got in a lot of trouble for it.

How much time did you spend in the studio?

Hours. Hours. I was a physical wreck when I finished the record... it took me five months to do the first one. I'm proud of it, in the sense that it's mistake-free, and it's perfect. And it's... that's the problem with it, you know. But it wasn't really me, it was like a machine. You know, I walked in, and I was sleepy all the time. I didn't really feel like recording for eighty percent of the record. But I did it anyway, because, by the time I had gotten close to \$100,000, it was like, you know, you were going to have to do something great. So, by that time, I didn't want to make any mistakes. The relationship between me and the executive producer that they assigned with me was horrifying.

Did Warner Bros. ever look as if they were just going to wash their hands of the whole thing, or were they committed?

No, I don't think so, because I owed them too much money.

They had to stick with you, so you could pay off.

Yeah. At least three albums. And I didn't want to do anything like interviews or touring. I was being real stubborn and bull-headed, and Owen didn't realize how to get it out of me, and make me stop. And, I don't know, our friendship died slowly after that. It just got strange.

DIRTY MIND

Did Warner Bros. flinch when you put "Head" on the third record?

They flinched at just about everything.

I wanted to ask you about the cover of Dirty Mind. How was that done?

We were just fooling around, and we were jamming at the time. It was summertime, and we were having fun. And that's what I had on. But my coat was closed, so the photographer didn't know. I was with some friends and...

Does everyone in Minneapolis just walk around with bikini underpants?



No. But, see... I don't know. I mean... once... I mean, if you've got a big coat on. I mean, who knows what he has on? I mean, it was hot out. Everybody was saying, why you got that hot coat on? I'd say, I'm really not that hot. [Laughs.] And they'd say, you gotta be.

How'd you pick that image of yourself? Where did it come from?

Well, I used to wear leotards and Danskins and stuff, because our stage show is really athletic and I wanted something comfortable. And my management said, "You have to at least start wearing underwear, because..."

It's funny, because you're a very imaginative guy. I would think for someone who draws on fantasies and wrote about dreams, fantasy would be important.

Well, it is. But it's not so much when you're rewriting a letter. Do you know what I mean? If I were to write a letter to a friend, and tell them about an experience, I wouldn't say how it made me feel; I would say exactly what I did, so that they could experience it, too, rather than the intellectual point of view. If you give them a situation, maybe that you've encountered, or whatever, give them the basis of it, let them take it to the next stage, they make the picture in their own mind.

I know I am happiest making records like this, making records that tell the truth and don't beat around the bush. Maybe I'm wrong for it, but I know the people at the concerts know exactly what the songs are about, sing right along, and are really into it. We have their attention. They understand, I think, and they're getting the message. I don't know. It seems real to me because... well, it is, because I'm saying exactly what's going around me. I say everything exactly the way it is.

THE LEGEND OF THE BLACK PRINCE

The British music publication *Blues & Soul*, issue number 386, July 26 – August 8 1983, carried a 3-page article which was said to be an edited transcription of a US radio interview earlier that year. It is questionable if this interview really took place. In all likelihood, the magazine made up their own story, partly basing it on quotes from other interviews Prince had given.

CHILDHOOD

I was born in Minneapolis. My father was a jazz band leader in a five state area. His biggest band was 25 pieces. It was called Prince Rogers Band. My mother was singing with the band before I was born.

By the time I was old enough to remember, my father had stopped playing all that much because I was around. He played mostly weekends and every night and he worked by day at Honeywell.

When I was five, I went to Austin, Minnesota, with him. I tried to get to see him one day during an afternoon matinee in a dance hall when my mother drove by to tell him something. I was supposed to wait in the car, but I stuck out and snuck into the hall to watch... It was great – I couldn't believe it, people were screaming. I loved the excitement, but a dancer spotted me, grabbed me, shook me up and took me back to the car. Her name was Kit. She was pretty.

We were on the road with him three days on that trip. From then on, I think I wanted to be a musician, but it took a long time before I saw myself being a musician for a profession. I thought I'd be whatever my father or mother thought was a good idea: a doctor, lawyer or pimp.

André Cymone's dad used to play bass for my dad's band. André's mom and my mom used to sit and watch them. I met André in church at five, but I never got to know him until Junior High.

At seven, I started playing piano. My dad left home for the first time and left his piano. He'd never let anyone play it before that. Now I could play it, so I learned songs from television. *Batman*, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, I played them by ear. In the 4th or 5th grade, I played in talent shows – I played piano or danced – and played original songs at nine or 10 years old.

When I learned piano at seven, I started writing songs, whatever seven year olds think about. I wrote fiction stories and I wrote lyrics. My mom used to have trashy pornography and I used to sneak them out of her room when I was eight. Then I got sick of those and started writing my own. I know those stories had a lot to do with my sexual awareness. I thought having to sneak the books out and sneak them back... The guilt was warping me.

FIRST BAND

Then I went to Junior High School at 12. I got my first band. I wanted to hear more instruments so I started Champagne, a 12-piece band. Only four of us played. Eight were faking, lip synching to our music. André and I played saxophone. I also played piano. I wrote all the music. The songs were all instrumentals. No one ever sang.

When I got into high school, I started to write lyrics... I started singing. When you begin getting paid to perform, you have to do Top 40, so you have to sing. I'd sing all the girl parts. This was at 13 or 14 years.

We'd sneak original material into the shows. I'd write the really, really vulgar stuff. There was one song called "Machine" that was about sex. I'd rather not even repeat the lyrics. I got away with it because audiences didn't pay much attention to originals, especially mine. I wrote what was interesting to me, I didn't really care about what was going on around me.

André was writing the really popular stuff. I was real torn. A lot of songs I never showed to the band. I only showed them songs that had a beat that would go over in concert. They all had these sexual lyrics. But I never showed the band the songs I was writing about insane painters in asylums and about death. Sex was always the most interesting thing to write about. It's the one subject people can't talk about without losing their cool. Have you ever noticed people can talk about Iran, they can talk about JFK being shot, but as soon as you bring up their sex life they start stuttering. My family life and death are far more personal to me than sex.

After my father left and my stepdad moved in when I was nine, I took as much of that as I could and started running away from home. The first time, I went to my dad's and stayed with him for six months. I was 12 years old. My stepdad angered me, but I didn't write songs about loneliness and depression until I was older. When you're younger you want to forget it.

From my dad's I ran to my aunt's then back to my dad's. When I was 13 and living with my aunt, she didn't have a piano, so my dad brought me an electric guitar and I learned to play. The guitar was bigger than I was. That's when my aunt kicked me out.

When I was 16, I stayed in André's basement. It was a turning point for me because I could do whatever I wanted. André's mom had to take care of seven of us, but she let me do whatever I wanted.

I was doing well in school. I wrote a ton of songs – my brain was free of everything. I didn't have anything to worry about. That's when I realized that music could express what you were feeling and it started coming out in my songs: loneliness and poverty and sex.

The thing that snapped me into going national was graduating school early, at 17. I had pulled the wool over their eyes at school. I always finished my assignments early and took extra classes and got ahead. So I got enough credits to get out fast. So, I suddenly realized I was going to have to feed myself. No more school lunches and no more money from my dad.

All I knew how to do was to make music. The band was making money, and all our money went into the bank, so we had a lot of money in the account. Our manager was naive. She didn't know how to get us a deal. My older sister Sharon lives in New York, so I went to live with her.

GOING SOLO

Our band had made some demos and Chris Moon, the head of the studio where we made them, asked me to help produce some commercials with him. I was 17. So I did it in exchange for studio time. I came up with a lot of songs. The band didn't want my songs, so I left.

I had three demos: "Soft & Wet," the single from the first LP, "Aces" (not on an LP), and "Machine." When I got to NY, I went to Atlantic Records. They told me to stay in NY and get the pulse of what music was like. I went to a production company, and went to Danielle Mauroy – who was rich and starting a company and had a record company background in France. She wanted to produce me. So did the production company. But they didn't want me to play the instruments or produce. I was 17 and they couldn't see it.

Meanwhile, my sister wanted to be my manager, but we didn't agree on decisions, so she kicked me out. I went back to Moon's studio who introduced me to my first real manager who got me a deal with Warner Brothers. He said he'd fight for me to produce myself. So I turned down the other

deals. Once I got the record deal, the Minneapolis papers were playing up this kid who got a six figure deal.

André was still with me as my bass player. Bobby was working as a messenger boy for my manager's ad agency. I met him going down to the ad agency every night to play. Every night Bobby asked if he could play drums. Finally, I said yes. There was a lot of pressure from my ex-buddies in other bands not to have white members in the band. But I always wanted a band that was black and white. Half the black musicians I knew only listened to one type of music. That wasn't good enough for me.

I record all the instruments because it takes longer to explain to someone else how to do it than to record.

"Uptown" is a song about a state of mind everyone has, but a lot of time people are afraid to show. An openness, being open to things you don't understand. The song takes the example of homosexuality and deals with the way we – the band – feel about life – that we're open and do whatever we want.



PRINCE TALKS

This *Rolling Stone* interview was the first time Prince talked to the press in three years. The interview was conducted by Minneapolis writer Neal Karlen over two days in May in Minneapolis. It was quite clear that Prince wanted to do the interview to clear up some of the lies and rumours surrounding himself. The interview was published in *Rolling Stone* September 12th, 1985.

ROCK CRITICS

Why have you decided that now is the time to talk?

There have been a lot of things said about me, and a lot of them are wrong. There have been a lot of contradictions, I don't mind criticism, I just don't like lies. I feel I've been very honest in my work and my life, and it's hard to tolerate people telling so many barefaced lies.

Do you read most of what's written about you?

A little, not much. Sometimes someone will pass along a funny one. I just wrote a song called "Hello," which is going to be on the flip side of "Pop Life." It says at the end, "Life is cruel enough without cruel words." I get a lot of cruel words. A lot of people do.

I saw critics be so critical of Stevie Wonder when he made *Journey Through The Secret Life Of Plants*. Stevie has done so many great songs, and for people to say, "You missed, don't do that, go back." Well, I would never say, "Stevie Wonder, you missed." Or Miles. Critics are going today. "Ah, Miles's done. Went off." Why say that? Why even tell Miles he went off? You know, if you don't like it, don't talk about it. Go buy another record!

Not long ago I talked to George Clinton, a man who knows and has done so much for funk. George told me how much he liked *Around The World In A Day*. You know how much more his words mean than those from some mamma-jamma wearing glasses and an alligator shirt behind a typewriter?

Do you hate rock critics? Do you think they're afraid of you?

No, it's no big deal. Hey I'm afraid of them! One time early in my career, I got into a fight with a New York writer, this little skinny cat, a real sidewinder. He said, "I'll tell you a secret, Prince. Writers write for other writers, and a lot of time it's more fun to be nasty." I just looked at him. But when I really thought about it and put myself in his shoes, I realized that's what he had to do. I could see his point. They can do whatever they want. And me, too. I can paint whatever picture I want with my albums. And I try to instill that in every act I've ever worked with.

PAISLEY PARK

What picture were you painting with Around The World In A Day?

I've heard some people say I'm not talking about anything on this record.

And what a lot of other people get wrong about the record is that I'm not trying to be this great visionary wizard. Paisley Park is in everybody's heart. It's not just something that I have the keys to. I was trying to say something about looking inside oneself to find perfection. Perfection is in everyone. Nobody's perfect, but they can be. We may never reach that, but it's better to strive than not.

Sounds religious.

As far as that goes, let me tell you a story about Wendy. We had to fly somewhere at the beginning of the tour, and Wendy is deathly afraid of flying. She got on the plane and really freaked. I was scared for her. I tried to calm her down with jokes, but it didn't work. I thought about it and said, "Do you believe in God?" She said yes. I said, "Do you trust him?" and she said she did. Then I asked, "So why are you afraid to fly?" She started laughing and said, "Okay, okay, okay." Flying still bothers her a bit, but she knows where it is and doesn't get freaked.

It's just so nice to know there is someone and someplace else. And if we're wrong, and I'm wrong, and there's nothing, then big deal! But the whole life I just spent, I at least had some reason to spend it.

When you talk about God, which God are you talking about? The Christian God? Jewish? Buddhist? Is there any God in particular you have in mind?

Yes, very much so. A while back, I had an experience that changed me and made me think differently about how and what I wrote and how I acted toward people. I'm going to make a film about it— not the next one, but the one after that. I've wanted to make it for three years now. Don't get me wrong—I'm still as wild as I was. I'm just funneling it in a different direction. And now I analyze things so much that sometimes I can't shut my brain off and it hurts. That's what the movie will be about.

What was the experience that changed you?

I don't really want to get into it specifically. During the *Dirty Mind* period, I would go into fits of depression and get physically ill. I would have to call people to help me get out of it. I don't do that anymore.

What were you depressed about?

A lot had to do with the band's situation, the fact that I couldn't make people in the band understand how great we could be together if we all played our part. A lot also had to do with being in love with someone and not getting any love back. And there was the fact that I didn't talk much with my father and sister. Anyway, a lot of things happened in this two-day period, but I don't want to get into it right now.

How'd you get over it?

That's what the movie's going to be about. Paisley Park is the only way I can say I got over it now. Paisley Park is the place one should find in oneself, where one can go when one is alone.

You say you've now found the place where you can go to be alone. Is it your house? Within the family you've built around you? With God?

It's a combination of things. I think when one discovers himself, he discovers God. Or maybe it's the other way around. I'm not sure... It's hard to put into words. It's a feeling— someone knows when they get it. That's all I can say.

Do you believe in heaven?

I think there is an afterworld. For some reason, I think it's going to look just like here, but that's part... I don't really like talking about this stuff. It's so personal.

*Does it bother you when people say you're going back in time with *Around The World In A Day*?*

No. What they say is that The Beatles are the influence. The influence wasn't The Beatles. They were great for what they did but I don't know how that would hang today. The cover art came about because I thought people were tired of looking at me. Who wants another picture of him? I would only want so many pictures of my woman, then I want the real thing. What would be a little more happening than just another picture [laughs] would be if there was some way I could materialize in people's cribs when they

play the record.

How do you feel about people calling the record "psychedelic"?

I don't mind that, because that was the only period in recent history that delivered songs and colors. Led Zeppelin, for example, would make you feel differently on each song.

FRIENDS AND STRANGERS

Does your fame affect your work?

A lot of people think it does, but it doesn't at all. I think the smartest thing I did was record *Around The World In A Day* right after I finished *Purple Rain*. I didn't wait to see what would happen with *Purple Rain*. That's why the two albums sound completely different. People think, "Oh, then the new album isn't half as powerful as *Purple Rain* or 1999." You know how easy it would have been to open *Around The World In A Day* with the guitar solo that's on the end of "Let's Go Crazy"? You know how easy it would have been to just put it in a different key? That would have shut everybody up who said the album wasn't half as powerful. I don't want

to make an album like the earlier ones. Wouldn't it be cool to be able to put your albums back to back and not get bored, you dig? I don't know how many people can play all their albums back to back with each one going to different cities.

Are there any current groups you listen to a lot and learn from?

Naah. The last album I loved all the way through was [Jon Mitchell's] *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*. I respect people's success, but I don't like a lot of popular music. I never did. I like more of the things I heard when I was little. Today, people don't write songs; they're a lot of sounds, a lot of repetition. That happened when producers took over, and that's why there's no more (live) acts. There's no box office anymore. The producers took over, and now nobody wants to see these bands.

People seem to think you live in an armed monastery that you've built in honor of yourself.

First off, I don't live in a prison with armed guards around me. The reason I have a guy outside is that after the movie, all kinds of people started coming over and hanging out. That wasn't so bad, but the neighbors got upset that people were driving by blasting their boxes or standing outside and singing. I happen to dig that. That's one reason I'm going to move to moreland. There, if people want to come by, it will be fine. Sometimes it gets lonely here. To be perfectly honest, I wish more of my friends would come by.

Friends?

Musicians, people I know. A lot of the time they think I don't want to be bothered. When I told Susannah (Melvoin) that you were coming over, she said, "Is there something I can do? Do you want me to come by to make it seem like you have friends coming by?" I said no, that would be lying. And she just put her head down, because she knew she doesn't come by to see me as much as she wants to, or as much as she thinks I want her to. It was interesting. See, you did something good, and you didn't even know it!

Are you afraid to ask your friends to come by?

I'm kind of afraid. That's because sometimes everybody in the band comes over, and we have very long talks. They're very few and far between, and I do a lot of the talking. Whenever we're done, one of them will come up to me and say, "Take care of yourself. You know I really love you." I think they love me so much, that if they came over all the time I wouldn't be able to be to them what I am, and they wouldn't be able to do for me what they do. I think we all need our individual spaces, and when we come together with what we've concocted in our heads, it's cool.

Does it bother you that strangers make pilgrimages to your house?

No, not at all. But there's a time and a place for everything. A lot of people have the idea that I'm a wild sexual person. It can be two o'clock in the afternoon, and someone really strange request from the call box outside. One girl just kept pressing the buzzer. She kept pressing it, and then she

**"I always try
to do something different
and conquer new ground."**

started crying. I had no idea why. I thought she might have fallen down. I started talking to her, and she just kept saying, "I can't believe it's you." I said, "Big deal. I'm no special person. I'm no different than anyone." She said, "Will you come out?" I said "Nope, I don't have much on." And she said, "That's okay."

I've lectured quite a few people out there. I'll say, "Think about what you're saying. How would you react if you were me?" I ask that question a lot: "How would you react if you were me?" They say, "Okay, okay."

THE REVOLUTION

What sound do you get from different members of The Revolution?

Bobby Z was the first one to join. He's my best friend. Though he's not such a spectacular drummer, he watches me like no other drummer would. Sometimes, a real great drummer, like Morris, will be more concerned with the lick he is doing as opposed to how I am going to break it down.

Mark Brown's just the best bass player I know, period. I wouldn't have anybody else. If he didn't play with me, I'd eliminate bass from my music. Same goes for Matt [Pink, the keyboard player]. He's more or less a technician. He can read and write like a whiz, and is one of the fastest in the world. And Wendy makes me seem all right in the eyes of people watching.

How so?

She keeps a smile on her face. When I sneer, she smiles. It's not premeditated, she just does it. It's a good contrast. Lisa is like my sister. She'll play what the average person won't. She'll press two notes with one finger so the chord is a lot larger, things like that. She's more abstract. She's into Joni Mitchell, too.

What about the other bands? Apollonia, Vanity, Mazarati, The Family? What are you trying to express through them?

A lot has to do with them. They come to me with an idea, and I try to bring that forth. I don't give them anything. I don't say, "Okay, you're going to do this, and you're going to do that." I mean, it was Morris' idea to be as sick as he was. That was his personality. We both like Don King and got a lot of stuff off him.

People think you control those bands, that it's similar to Rick James' relationship with the Mary Jane Girls. A lot of people think he's turning all the knobs.

I don't know their situation. But you look at Sheila E. performing, and you can just tell she's holding her own. The same goes for The Family. You and I were playing ping-pong, and they were doing just fine.

After all these years, does the music give you as much of a rush as it used to?

It increases more and more. One of my friends worries that I'll short-circuit. We always say I'll make the final fade on a song one time. It just gets more and more interesting every day. More than anything else, I try not to repeat myself. It's the hardest thing in the world to do—there's only so many notes one human being can master. I write a lot more than people think I do, and I try not to copy that.

I think that's the problem with the music industry today. When a person does get a hit, they try to do it again the same way. I don't think I've ever done that. I write all the time and cut all the time. I want to show you the archives, where all my old stuff is. There's tons of music I've recorded there. I have the follow-up album to 1999. I could put it all together and play it for you, and you would go "Yeah!" And I could put it out, and it would probably sell what 1999 did. But I always try to do something different and conquer new ground.

In people's minds, it all boils down to "Is Prince getting too big for his breeches?" I wish people would understand that I always thought I was bad. I wouldn't have got into the business if I didn't think I was bad.

MTV PRESENTS PRINCE

The MTV interview was filmed in Nice, France, on a day off from filming *Under The Cherry Moon*, October 27th, 1985. MTV submitted a list of questions which Steven Fargnoli asked Prince during this interview session. The entire interview lasted about 25 minutes, of which MTV broadcast 18 minutes. The interview was first aired November 15th, 1985, but has been repeated many times over the years.

JAMES BROWN AND JIMI HENDRIX

One thing I'd like to say is that I don't live in a prison and I'm not afraid of anything. I haven't built any walls around myself and I am just like anyone else. I need love and water and I don't really consider myself a superstar. I live in a small town and I always will, cause I can walk around and be me.

That's all that I want to be, that's all I ever tried to be.

James Brown played a big influence on my style. When I was about 10 years old my stepdad put me on a stage with him and I danced a little bit until the bodyguard took me off. The reason why I like James Brown so much is on my way backstage, on my way out, I saw some of the finest dancing girls I've ever seen in my life, and I think and I respect... he influenced me by his control, his group, his dancing girls, his apples and his oranges...

In the Rolling Stone interview you said you were surprised by so many people comparing you to Hendrix when you play guitar.

Hendrix was very good, but there will never be anyone like him, and it will be a pity to try. I strive for originality in my work. Hopefully it will be perceived that way.

SELLING OUT

Some people have criticised you for selling out to the white rock audience with Purple Rain and leaving your black listeners behind. How do you respond to that?

Come on! Come on!!! Seriously... I was brought up in a black and white world. Yes, black and white, night and day, rich and poor, black and white. I listened to all kinds of music when I was young. And, when I was younger I always said that one day I was gonna play all kinds of music, and not be judged for the color of my skin, but the quality of my work, and hopefully that will continue. I think there are a lot of people out there that understand this, cause they support me and my habits and I support them and theirs.

A lot of people were offended by what they saw sexism in Purple Rain...

No, wait, wait. I didn't write *Purple Rain*, someone else did, and it was a story, a fictional story, and should be perceived that way and nothing else. Violence is something that happens in everyday life and we were only telling a story. I wish it would be looked on that way but I don't think anything we did was unnecessary. Sometimes for the sake of humour we may have went overboard, and if that was the case, then I'm sorry. But it was not the intention.

With Jesse and Morris, and Jerome, and Jimmy, and Terry. They have the makings of one of the greatest R&B bands in history. And there is no one that could wreck a house like their groove. I was a bit troubled by their demise, but like I said before, it's important that one is happy, first and foremost.

PAISLEY PARK IS AN ALTERNATIVE

One thing I tried to do with the things that I direct mainly for our acts is go for the different, the out of the norm, the out of purple, so to speak. The thing that's unique about it, when you are in a situation that I am in now with these people, is that they all know who they are and they agree with me when we say one thing that a record label and all our acts, the music that we produce, is an alternative. If someone wants to go along for that ride, then... cool.

We have talked to the people that were doing the *USA For Africa* and they said it was cool that I gave up a song for the album, which was the best thing for the both of us, I think. I'm strongest in a situation where I'm surrounded by people I know. So, it's better that I did it that way, the music, than going down and participating there, I probably would have just clammed up with so many great people and I'm an admirer of all people who participated. I don't want there to be any hard feelings.

Paisley Park is an alternative. I'm not saying it's greater or badder, it's just something else. It's multi-colored and it's very fun. I believe in God. There is only one God, and I believe in the afterworld and hopefully we will all see it. I've been accused of a lot of things contrary to this and I just want people to know I'm very sincere in my beliefs. I pray every night and I don't ask for much. I just say thank you.

THE ELECTRIFYING MOJO

Quite unexpectedly, Prince placed a call to Electrifying Mojo, a long time Prince supporting DJ at WHYT in Detroit, prior to his birthday concert in the city, June 7th 1986. In the friendly 15-minute interview, Prince paid tribute to his Detroit followers and talked about the upcoming *Under The Cherry Moon*.

Hello Prince!

Hello Detroit!

How are you?

Alright, how are you?

Well Prince, I heard nothing but a magic flowing down from the concert. How was it?

Mmmm, a lot of fun, you should have been there. I'm just happy to be here, and it's a fine way to spend my birthday, for sure.

Happy birthday to you!

Thank you.

Prince, you've been the entertainer that has insisted on doing things one way, your way.

Well, you know, I worked a long time under a lot of different people and most of the time while I was doing it their way and I mean that was cool. But, I figured that if I worked hard enough and I kept my head straight, one day I get to do it on my own and that's what happened and so I feel like... I don't try to hurt nobody and like I said I keep my head on straight, my way usually is the best way.

Growing up in "Minnywood," as it's been now called, simply because that is the hot-point on this planet right now.

It's been called a lot of things, but it's always Uptown to me.

Uptown?

Yes.

What was it like growing up Uptown?

Aaah, pretty different, kind of sad to be exact; mean the radio was dead, the discos were dead, the ladies were kinda dead, it was all like, you know, for you who wanted to make some noise and wanted to turn anything out, you just gotta have to put something together, which was what we did and we put together a few bands and we turned it into Uptown, that consisted a lot of bike-riding nude but, you know, it worked, we had fun.

That's why I wanted to come here on my birthday, cause I wanted to give them a little taste of where we live and get a little taste of where you all live. To me this is like my second home, if I could spend the night in somebody's crib, I would, but this hotel, they're really nice to us, but this bed is hard.

You've made fantastic albums and you've made fantastic movies, and you're making another movie right now. What's the difference between making a hot movie and making a hot album?

There is no difference. There have been people who was trying to tell me contrary that, but like you said before, and like I said before, in my strive for perfection and sometimes I'm a little bald-headed in my ways, hopefully people understand that I've just a lot on my mind and I try to stay focused on one particular thing and I try not to hurt nobody in the process. The movie is a little bit more complex but to me it's just a larger version of an album. There are scenes and there are songs, and they all go together to make this painting. Jerome Benton stars in this new film with me, and he is on his way to becoming very, very big, I'm real proud of him. He takes direction well, and he gives direction well and I expect a lot of big things from him.

Ah, speaking of Jerome Benton and other people who've flown under the wings of Prince, and also speaking of Detroit's own Billy Sparks, a person that you took from Detroit, put him in your first movie. You've always maintained contact with people that you've always been in contact with.

Oh, yeah. Without a doubt, mean that there's people that have gone off to do their own thing which is great and I stand behind them and support them whatever they do. But, contrary to rumors, we're all real tight still and

I have a strange feeling we're all gonna be together again one day, we'll have to see.

Do you think that there's a possibility that after this movie has been released, that that is gonna take place that, well I've, you know, just heard rumors thru the grapevine, that, there's a possibility that The Time is gonna record again. A possibility, you know, that...

Well Mojo, anything is possible. God willing and hopefully everybody's head will be in the right place, I'd like to see all that happen. They were, to be perfectly honest, the only band I was afraid of and they were turning in to Godzilla and certain things happened, different waves flowed, different winds blew and everybody fell apart, but I still love all those guys and I hope they get back together cause I want some competition, you know. [Laugh.]

*Let's talk about the album *Around The World In A Day*, which I think was one of the greatest albums. What type of mood were you in when you recorded that album?*

I sort of had a "FU-attitude," meaning that I was making something for myself and my fans and the people who've supported me thru the years, I wanted to give them something and it was like my little letter and those people are the ones that wrote me back and told me that they felt what I was feeling, you know, and it... record sales and things like that, it really doesn't matter, you know. I mean it keeps the roof over your head and it keeps money in all these folks' pockets that I go hanging around here, you know. But it basically stands for the music and I'm just

hoping that people understand that, you know. Money is one thing, but soul is another and that's all we're really trying to do, you know. I don't know, it's... I wouldn't mind if I just went broke, you know, cause just as long as I could play this type of thing and come here, you know. I mean there were a lot of people there tonight and they turned the lights on and I looked up and, you know, it brings tears to your eyes because, it's just, you can feel the love in the room, you know, and that means more than money, you know, and I could just... I could go on for hours, cause I don't know, I just have fun and I'm thankful to be alive, you know.

What's a day like in the life of Prince.

Work. I work a lot, I'm trying to get a lot of things done very quickly so that I can stop working for a while, everyone's afraid I'm gonna die. [Laugh.]

You say you are afraid?

No, I'm not afraid, everyone else is afraid, they think I work too much. I'm not afraid of anything.

Some people have even called you the "workaholic-ever-moving-one-man-storm," is that true?

I don't know, the thing is that, when you're called, you're called, you know, and when I hear things in my sleep, I walk around, and when I go into the bathroom and try to brush my teeth and all of a sudden my toothbrush start vibrating, that's a groove, you know, and you've gotta go with that and that means, drop the tooth-brush and get down to the studio and get to a bass guitar quick, you know, and I don't know, my best things has come out like that

Some people say you probably have in your secret vault, in the Prince music vault, about 500 tunes that you've done, that you haven't even considered using yet, that you could put out an album for the next 20 years, two albums a year.

No, not that many, 320 to be exact.

That have never been released?

Mm.

And it's been a rumor that they all sound different that's why probably each album that you release is just a little bit different.

They're knocking on my door now...

Prince, it's been one big pleasure, I mean, like, you know, words cannot describe, you know, this moment. I don't think words can describe how Detroit feels about Prince.



PRINCE TALKS (2)

Published on October 18th 1990, the *Rolling Stone* interview was conducted by Neal Karlen (who also did the 1985 *Rolling Stone* interview) while on the *Nude* tour with Prince in mid-August 1990. It was the first time in five years that Prince talked to the press at any length. Prince explained that he didn't like being interviewed, because he wanted to avoid "that big Q followed by that big A, followed by that line after line of me either defending myself or cleaning up stories that people have told about me."



FILM-SPEAK

Some magazine a little while ago promised me their cover if I answered five written questions. The first one was "What are your exact beliefs about God?" Now how can I answer that without sounding like a fool?

There's nothing a critic can tell me that I can learn from. If they were musicians, maybe. But I hate reading about what some guy sitting at a desk thinks about me. You know, "He's back, and he's black," or "He's back, and he's bad." Whew! Now, on *Graffiti Bridge*, they're saying I'm back and more traditional. Well, "Thieves in the Temple" and "Tick, Tick, Bang" don't sound like *nothing* I've ever done before.

Still, in the coming days he addresses just about everything short of Kim Basinger ("I really don't know her that well") or anybody else he's dating ("I never publicize that. My friends around town are surprised when I introduce them to someone I'm seeing").

Prince is still very funny. ("You can always renegotiate a record contract. You just go in and say, 'You know, I think my next project will be a country & western album.'") He can still play the cocky rocker:

I don't go to award shows anymore. I'm not saying I'm better than anybody else. But you'll be sitting there at the Grammys, and U2 will beat you. And you say to yourself, "Wait a minute. I can play that kind of music, too." I played La Crosse [Wisconsin] growing up. I know how to do that, you dig? But you will not do "Housequake."

Film-speak is now part of his vocabulary; the first director Prince mentions he admires is Woody Allen, "because I like anyone who gets final cut." Movies have also worked their way into his philosophical references.

If you're making your moves in life because of money or pride, then you'll end up like that dude who got beat up on the grass at the end of Wall Street. He'd been wheeling and dealing, then *oomph!* That's what time it was!

He's been studying, he says, and learning from his own film failures.

I don't regret anything about *Under The Cherry Moon*. I learned that I can't direct what I didn't write.

Participating in *Batman*, meantime, allowed him to spy on the making of a megaton hit. Composing songs on locations, Prince mostly stayed on the sidelines and just watched.

There was so much pressure on [director] Tim [Burton], that for the whole picture, I just said, "Yes, Mr. Burton, what would you like?"

Burton had hired him on the recommendation of Jack Nicholson, a longtime Prince fan. Prince, who'd never met Nicholson before, found the inspiration for "Partyman" when he first saw the actor on the set.

He just walked over, sat down and put his foot up on a table, real cool. He had this attitude that reminded me of Morris [Day]—and there was that song.

Prince says he'll survive if *Graffiti Bridge* is less than a blockbuster.

I can't please everybody. I didn't want to make *Die Hard 4*. But I'm also

not looking to be Francis Ford Coppola. I see this more like those 1950s rock & roll movies.

Unfortunately, rumors have swirled for months that a better comparison might be the 1959 howler *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. "I don't mind," says Prince.

Somemightnotgetit But people also said *Purple Rain* was unreleasable. And now I drive to work each morning to my own big studio.

People are going, "Oh, this is Prince's big gamble." What gamble? I made a \$7 million movie with somebody else's money, and I'm sitting here finishing it.

FROM THE BLACK ALBUM TO GRAFFITI BRIDGE

Prince has changed his outlook on how to present his still eros-heavy creations. The change, he says, came soon after he finished the *Black Album*, in 1987. Prince says he aborted the project because of one particular dark night of the soul "when a lot of things happened all in a few hours." He won't get specific, saying only that he saw the word *God*.

And when I talk about God, I don't mean some dude in a cape and a beard coming down to Earth. To me, he's in everything if you look at it that way.

I was very angry a lot of the time back then, and that was reflected in that album. I suddenly realized that we can die at any moment, and we'd be judged by the last thing we left behind. I didn't want that angry, bitter thing to be the last thing. I learned from that album, but I don't want to go back.

By the time of the album *Lovesexy*, Prince says, he was a certifiably nicer human being—and a happier creator.

I feel good most of the time, and I like to express that by writing from joy. I still do write from anger sometimes, like "Thieves in the Temple." But I don't like to. It's not a place to live.

He's been angling for a different effect on each album he has made in the last few years.

What people were saying about *Sign O' The Times* was "There are some great songs on it, and there are some experiments on it." I hate the word *experiment*—it sounds like something you didn't finish. Well, they have to understand that's the way to have a double record and make it interesting.

Lovesexy, Prince says, was "a mind trip," like a psychedelic movie. Either you went with it and had a mind-blowing experience or you didn't. All that album cover was, was a picture. If you looked at that picture and some ill come out of your mouth, then that's what you are—it's looking right back at you in the mirror.

The *Graffiti Bridge* soundtrack, a couple cuts of which have been floating around for a few years, "is just a whole bunch of songs," he says.

Nobody does any experiments or anything like that. But I still want to know how it stands up to the other albums. I'm always going forward, always trying to surprise myself. It's not about hits. I knew how to make hits by my second album.

PRINCE ON OTHER ARTISTS

While being so productive on his own, Prince has also found time to produce such disparate talents as Mavis Staples, George Clinton and Bonnie Raitt.

The best thing about producing is that there are so many really talented people out there who just never got that push over the top. Without that push, they just get lost.

Raitt was perhaps his most talked-about reclamation project.

Oh, those sessions were kicking! There was no particular reason it didn't come out. I was just working on a lot of things at the same time, and I didn't give myself enough time to work with her. I used to do that a lot—start five different projects and only get a couple done. That's the biggest thing I'm working on: patience and planning.

Prince also gives highly favorable mentions to the likes of Madonna, Michael Jackson, Patti LaBelle and Bette Midler. Prince and Springsteen occasionally exchange notes; in recalling a Springsteen concert he saw from backstage a few years back, Prince displays the respect of a general reviewing another man's army.

I'm not really into Bruce Springsteen's music, but I have a lot of respect

**"I play music.
I make records.
I make movies.
I don't do interviews."**



for his talent I admire the way he holds his audience – there's one man whose fans I could never take away. At one point, his band start going off somewhere. Springsteen turned around and shot the band one terrifying look. You know they got right back on it!

For his own enjoyment, however, Prince usually relies on himself.

I like a lot of people's music, and I'm interested in what's going on, but I don't listen to them. When I'm getting ready to go out or driving in the car, I listen to my own stuff. Never the old stuff. That's the way it's always been.

Earlier in the day, Prince had refused to make any predictions about the future.

I don't want to say anything that can be held against me later. Mick Jagger said he hoped he wouldn't be singing "Satisfaction" at 30, and he's still singing it. Pete Townshend wrote, "Hope I die before I get old." Well, now he is old, and I hope he's happy to be around.

And himself?

When I pray to God, I say, "It's your call – when it's time to go, it's time to go." But as long as you're going to leave me here, then I'm going to cause much ruckus!

FRESH PRINCE

Scott Poulson-Bryant of *Spin* magazine was one of several journalists that were invited to Paisley Park during the promotional "campaign" for *Diamonds And Pearls*. After attending a rehearsal, he was introduced to Prince. He was given a CD of *Diamonds And Pearls* to listen to while he talked a bit with Prince. Their conversation ended up in the September 1991 issue of *Spin*.

Finishing the song – "Elephants And Flowers" from Graffiti Bridge, Prince strolls over to me. We're introduced. And what is my first question to Prince? "Why

Aunt Esther?" And what does he do? He laughs a long laugh.

She's our inspiration. Do you need anything?

"I haven't heard the new album yet," is my answer, trying not to sound too greedy.

You'll hear it before you go.

Prince comes into Studio B, changed into black pants with a white shirt tied at the waist, carrying a CD. We get lyric sheets and the adventure begins. Drums. Big, loud, funky drums announce "Thunder," the first cut. It prompts Prince to tell me that he's writing a ballet for a corps of belly dancers.

I saw the Joffrey Ballet in New York, got interested, and the dancers asked me to do it.

I tell him about Rosie recording the demo on Saturday.

I love her voice. Can you imagine her voice with some kickin' rock track. I can because soon "Daddy Pop" is playing and Rosie's voice is in there, complementing Prince's.

This song is about people who talk shit.

I recognize "Willing And Able" from the rehearsal earlier that day.

I had a dream that I was playing this on MTV Unplugged.

Why don't you?

I want to. I will.

I ask him about the drum sound on the record, the most notable change from his earlier work. His answer?

Everybody else went out and got drum machines and computers, so I threw mine away.

As the album plays, one by one, the band members stroll into the studio. Prince receives the liner notes for the album, inspects them, and passes them around, even giving them to me to check out. This guy doesn't come off as a control freak, I'm thinking, this homeboy in heels, telling me jokes about women who come to his house when he blasts "Insatiable," stripping off their clothes to the beat.

A PERSONAL PEEK INSIDE PAISLEY PARK

Edna Gundersen of *USA Today* was also invited to Paisley Park. She found Prince to be "surprisingly chatty and polite." Prince talked vaguely about a spiritual transformation, referring to a vision of a vast field with the letters G-O-D hovering overhead, that led him to shelve the *Black Album*. He also revealed that he had 385 unreleased finished recordings in the vault. Their meeting was detailed in *USA Today*, September 11th 1991.

I'm creating a sound that nobody's heard before. There aren't a lot of electronics this time. I'm bored with electronics.

Diamonds And Pearls is Prince's fifth album in five years.

I can't wait four years between records. What am I going to do for four years? I'd just fill up the vault with more songs.

Unlike Batman and Graffiti Bridge, Diamonds And Pearls is not tethered to a film, leaving Prince free to explore new realms.

Making hits is the easiest thing I could do. But it's like taking a ribbon for a race someone else won. I can't do that. I can't repeat myself.

Last year's critically savaged Graffiti Bridge, which bombed at the box office, is still a sore subject that stokes his defensive ire.

Graffiti Bridge was not a failure. It was one of the purest, most spiritual, uplifting things I've ever done. It was non-violent, positive and had no blatant sex scenes. Maybe it will take people 30 years to get it. They trashed *The Wizard Of Oz* at first too.

Negative attitudes poison the entertainment industry, he says.

I always see myself described as arrogant or pretentious. I just do what I want. I don't consider that arrogance. We should stop arguing and stop attacking each other. The first time I heard Yoko Ono sing, I went, hey, you got to quit that— today! But I had to stop myself. How can I say she shouldn't sing? Maybe she feels a strong need to express herself.

He's not dismayed by pop's current crop of manufactured videogenic stars.

Education is the real problem. Nobody's learning how to make music, how to read and write it, and how to play. I worry that we're raising a whole generation that's going to turn out nothing but samples and rehashes.

CREAM TEASE

One of the few British magazines invited to Paisley Park for a conversation with Prince was *Sky Magazine*. Editor Simon Mills had a few words with Prince, portrayed in the October 1991 issue of the magazine.

He's standing next to me with his hands in his pockets. I can see the hairs on his chest. I can see that he's not wearing any underwear. For a second I don't know what to say, then I hear Michael Bland, the drummer, hit the snare with that distinctive Paisley Park "thwok!" sound. "You seem to have changed the drum sound on the new album" (terrible first question).

What? Oh right, well everybody else was using electric drums and computers so we decided to try something different.

His voice is soft and toy-like, as if he talks just like he sings, but as soon as we begin our brief conversation I realize talking to Prince is one part verbals to five parts grins, grimaces and eye rolling.

No one else has that drum sound. How did you discover it, was it a kind of happy accident?

No, it was no accident. When you're in the studio you can change the sound of all the drums electronically. That's all we did.

I recall a mysterious piece of Paisley vocabulary from the lyric sheet of the new album. "What does 'gangk' mean?"

Oh, that's a word Tony heard. It means 'dis,' you know 'disrespect.'

I like your new guitar. Is it your old one painted a different color?

No, I just smashed up the old one the last time *The Revolution* played

together. It was very sad. This is a brand new one.

There doesn't seem to be so much guitar on the new album. Why is that?

Well what about "Thunder," the first track on the album? What about "Gett Off," that's a pretty heavy guitar track. And what about "Cream," that has a lot of guitar parts, too.

"Prince, there's a track on the Black Album..." Prince interrupts and starts talking like an old man. "...called 'Dead On It' where you seem to be criticising rap music. You seem to have changed your mind now."

Well, first I never said I didn't like rap, I just said that the only good rappers were the ones who were "dead on it"—the ones who knew what they were talking about. I didn't used to like all that braggadocio stuff. "I'm bad, I'm this, I'm that." Anyway, everybody has the right to change their mind.

PRINCE INVITES BLACK BEAT TO PAISLEY PARK

After visiting Paisley Park and attending a rehearsal by Prince and The New Power Generation, the editor of *Black Beat*, Steve Ivory, got to talk to Prince at Glam Slam around the time of the release of *Diamonds And Pearls*. Their conversation was brief, but showed that Prince is very aware of what the critics have to say about him. It was published in *Black Beat*, January 1992.

Prince and the Warners exec sat upstairs under the watchful eye of a bodyguard in the VIP area overlooking the crowded dance floor below. Prince gauged reaction to the then-unreleased steamy video for "Violet The Organ Grinder," which played on video monitors throughout the club. They loved it, of course. I hadn't heard the track before either; I went over and asked Prince what it was.

None of your business.

He chased the line with a smile, but there was no denying the edge on it.

You can have a copy of it, if you don't write something crazy about it.

This was the Prince I was ready for at the rehearsal. This Prince, however, obviously had some points to make. The Warners exec got visibly nervous all over again, poor guy.

Let me ask you something? Why is it your stuff always has a strange slant on it when it comes to me?

"That's not true," I replied, surprised that this guy was even paying attention to what is written about him.

Oh yeah, man. Your stuff seems to have a strange vibe on it when it comes to me.

I told him I was one of his biggest fans, though I admitted that my biggest crime was in periodically writing that he should get back to the kind of stuff he built a foundation on, like his landmark 1999 album. This incensed him.

That's why I stay here in Minneapolis and do my work, and block out you critics. Let me tell you something: 1999 amounts to me being in the third grade musically. That's where I was then, and I had to grow musically from where I was before it to make it. I had to push aside 1999 to get where I am now. It's called growth. You wanna hear stuff like 1999 again, then listen to 1999. I'm someplace else now.

The conversation limped uncomfortably on about music, but it was clear that Prince had heard enough. He became indifferent, asked why I wasn't out on the dance floor, and then excused himself to sit alone, a table away. I'd apparently worn out my welcome.



OUT-OF-DATE ADVERTISEMENT HAS BEEN REMOVED.